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Thesis

The Seventh Century B.C. in Israelite History and Religion

by

John Philip Lindsay
(A.B., Hamline University, 1930)

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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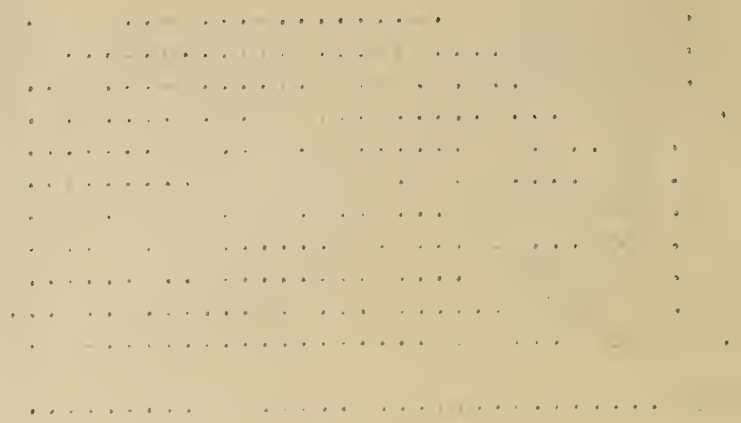

Introduction

Geographical

[1]"The Old Testament World, may, roughly speaking, be said to be inclosed by five bodies of water, namely, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea. The countries lying along these waters prominently associated with Hebrew history are Arabia, in the center, most probably the original home of the Hebrews as of the Semitic race in general; Babylonia, Assyria, and Mesopotamia, lying north in the valley of the Euphrates and Tigris; Egypt, in the Nile valley to the south; and the "Isles of the Sea," by which are meant the coastlands as well as the islands of the Mediterranean as far west as Tarshish in Spain. In the very center of the entire region lies Palestine, or Canaan, the land of the Hebrews." [2]"The land where the Hebrews finally crystallized into a nation is a strip of mountain and fertile valley that lies along the eastern Mediterranean coast and extends inland for perhaps a hundred miles. Today it is divided into two parts: (1) the northern half, extending from Damascus and Beirut to Alexandretta and the Euphrates, and named Syria; (2) and the southern half, reaching from the same dividing line to the desert and the Egyptian boundary, and called

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1. Peritz, Old Testament History, p. 32

2. Bailey and Kent, History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, pp. 9-10

Palestine or the Holy Land." [1]"What we now call Palestine, the land on both sides of the Jordan, is a comparatively small bit of earth, only about eight thousand, five hundred square miles in extent; that is, a little more than the area of Massachusetts, or of Wales and Herefordshire."

This then, is the land and home of the People of Israel. A narrow strip of land, lying along the eastern Mediterranean coast. A territory about one hundred and fifty miles in length, and one hundred miles in breadth. A small region, a little larger than the State of Massachusetts; and divided into east and west by the river Jordan. A territory, placed in the hub position of the lands of the east. A rugged, hilly, country, with fertile valleys and pastures; with rocky desert regions; a country which on the whole is arid and dry. This is the setting for the historic drama of the people of Israel.

What reasons can we offer for entering into a study of a nation, which, small in total numbers, inhabits such a seemingly insignificant place on the earth? The primary factor is the Hebrew religion, which has been such a tremendous moral force in the world. Growing out of it we have our own Christian faith and religion, which has carried the growth of civilization, parallel to its own development. Just as from the Greek and

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[1]Cornill, History of the People of Israel, p. 10

and Roman worlds we receive our intellectual heritage, so from the Hebrew world, we take our religious legacy. [1]"Just as on the secular side our whole intellectual life is rooted in Hellas and Latium, so on the religious side it is rooted in Israel: Israel gave the world the true God and the true religion." From the Old Testament world as a whole, we get many contributions in the fields of art and science. Brick-making, arch construction, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, literature, and art in general have come as a part of our heritage. [2]"But the chief claim of the Hebrew world to our regard lies in the fact that the ideals of democracy which today are winning acceptance among all civilized races first developed within this area....It was in the soil of the barren steppe lands that encircle Palestine and among the nomadic tribes of the wilderness that the seeds of democracy first took root....In time their ideals regarding the fundamental rights of man and his duties to his fellows were expressed in definite laws, and all later democratic legislation is largely an unfolding of what is there set forth in principle."

Significance of Seventh Century B.C.

The seventh century B. C. was a significant era in Hebrew history. Up to this period, there had been two independent nations, Israel to the north, and Judah of the south, comprising the Hebrew people. In the year 722 B. C., Samaria

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[1]Corn ill, History of the People of Israel

[2]Bailey and Kent, History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, pp. 13-14

fell beneath the impact of Assyrian military power, under the leadership of Sargon II. This monarch deported a large group of the citizens of the city, and repopulated the place with people from other sections of Asia. In this way, the national spirit of Israel was lost, and the tribes of the north were absorbed into other peoples. The kingdom of the north fell, and its inhabitants were dispersed. The ten tribes vanished from sight. The breakup of Israel left Judah the task of carrying on Hebrew thought and tradition. Judah, as well as the other countries of the east, was faced during this century with the task of keeping peace through submission to the powerful and warlike empire of Assyria. This period marks the final glory and greatness of this remarkable nation. Under Sennacherib, Esharhaddon and Ashurbanipal, the Assyrian Empire reached its height. This empire controlled the east during this time; but in the year 612 B. C., Nineveh fell under the advance of the combined power of the Medes and the Chaldeans. Like its victim Israel, Assyria vanished from the earth, and departed from sight as a world power. Egypt, the other great neighbor of Judah, was in the main quiescent during this century. There was, however, in the closing years of the period, a revival of Egyptian power under Necho. This movement was of no great consequence, as Nebuchadrezzar met and defeated Necho in 605 B. C., at the battle of Carchemish.

Historical

Judah felt the curse of the reign of Manasseh, during which time there was the great reaction against the religion of Yaweh, in favor of the idolatrous religions of the

east. He was followed by Amon, who in turn was followed by Josiah, a wise and just king. Under Josiah, conditions were improved, and religious reform was enacted. And finally we close our period with the disastrous history of the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B. C., followed by the subsequent Babylonian exile. This capture and destruction of Jerusalem, and the following exile, marks we may say, the end of any great organized Hebrew state. (This statement is relative, taking into consideration the history of the revived Jewish state under the Maccabees.)

Religious

In the field of religion, this century is important for the Hebrew nation. It opened with the superficial religious reforms under King Hezekiah. These reforms were followed by a period of violent reaction, in which the evils that they sought to correct were revived. The religion of the prophets was despised; the prophetic party was persecuted, and much innocent blood was shed. The idolatrous religions again came into favor, with their accompaniments of immoralities. The period of Josiah is very significant; for it was during his reign that the Book of the Law, or Deuteronomy was discovered in the temple. The finding of this book led to a new religious reform, which corrected many evils in the land. But more significant than this reform, this book became the basis for the Hebrew religion of the future. It was by this book that man came to live. It was through this book that men came to interpret their religion.

In the prophetic world, the period is important due to the fact that it was during this century that Jeremiah did his great work. This great, if not the greatest of the Hebrew prophets, contributed much to the religion of his people; likewise he contributed much to the political life of his time. He is well worth our study. We find his contemporaries, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk, of interest and value.

Due to these reasons, we feel that this century is of importance in a study of the historical and religious life of the Hebrew people. We may say that it is primarily a period of transition. Politically, it opens with the fall of Israel, and ends with the capture of Jerusalem, and the exile of the people of Judah. In the religious life of the people, it is a time of reform and reaction against reform. It marks the finding of the Book of the law, which was to transform the religion of Israel from a religion of the spirit into a religion of the law. The prophetic contributions came mostly from Jeremiah, with his stress on morality; his solution to the problem of suffering; and his declaration that religion was an individual relationship between man and his God.

In the writing of this paper, there will be no attempt to go into any great detail. The paper has been written with the belief that its purpose is to present in more or less panoramic view, the sweep of life, as it is seen in the Hebrew nation during the seventh century B. C. The point of view, therefore,

has been that of the presentation of movements and periods from the pictorial standpoint, rather than the presentation of the history in detail. We shall attempt to relate the history of Egypt and Assyria to Jewish history, as these nations come into contact with Judah at this time.

Historical background for the Seventh Century: Reign of Hezekiah

All of the various small kingdoms of the west had been touched by the conflict which had wiped out Israel's national existence. In Judah, Hezekiah, the young king, did not enter into conflict with the Assyrian forces; but chose rather to pay tribute to the great power. For nine years, accordingly, the Judean king paid his tribute to his Assyrian overlord. During this period of nine years, Hezekiah attended to the internal development of his kingdom. He built the water conduit from the spring Gihon, outside of the walls of the city, to the spring called Siloam, inside of the city. He strengthened the fortifications of Jerusalem, built cities, and encouraged trade and agriculture. He may have begun during this time the religious reforms which were carried out principally in the latter part of his reign.

Around the year 711 B. C., Egypt again desired to try her power against Assyria. Shabaka, the Egyptian king, sent out his agents and formed a league of conspirators against Assyria; and in this group were Ashdod, Gath, Edom, Moab, and Judah.

Nothing came of this revolt. The rebellion of Ashdod was soon put down by Sargon, and the rest of the plotters pretended to have nothing to do with it. Judah, and King Hezekiah, had almost met with grief in this intrigue; but Hezekiah did not learn his lesson from the near tragedy. He kept on with his plotting with Egypt. Isaiah, the prophet and statesman of Judah, for the first time in ten years again came out into action. He knew that there was no real power to be found in Egypt, and that to make an alliance with that country, could only prove disastrous for Judah in the end. The prophets all held the belief that Egypt was a land to be avoided in looking for military aid. So Isaiah went around in a disclothed state for three years, preaching against any alliance with the country of Egypt. The king and his advisers were forced to listen, through public opinion, to the plea of Isaiah; and while they did not stop their intriguing, Judah was not caught in the revolts of 711 and 710 against Assyria. In 705 B. C., Sargon was murdered by Sennacherib, his son, who succeeded him upon the Assyrian throne.

Sennacherib

Sennacherib immediately had trouble in his empire; but after four years' struggle, he subdued the opposing elements. He first had to again overcome Babylon, and Merodach-baladan, its leader. While he was engaged in this task, the west was again seething with rebellion. Jerusalem became the center of activity for the revolters. Again Isaiah insisted on declaring

that it was folly for Israel to ally herself with a country of the type of Egypt; and he condemned the pro-Egyptian party and its leaders. At the same time, Hezekiah fell sick with an abscess. Feeling that he would die, he sent for Isaiah, who told him that he must die. He prayed to Jehovah to spare his life. During this time, Isaiah received word to tell the king that he would live, and that Jerusalem would be saved from the hand of the Assyrian, Sennacherib. The king recovered from his sickness. His illness and recovery gave Merodach-baladan an excuse to send an embassy to visit Hezekiah. Its real mission, however, was political. He wanted the help of Judah in his struggle against Assyria. Judah, however, did not revolt; and the mission failed to accomplish its purpose. Hezekiah, however, showed the ambassadors his arsenal and treasure. For this he was rebuked by Isaiah, who held that he had done a rash deed. First, he had shown Assyria that Judah was against her; and second, he had aroused the greed and cupidity of Babylon by disclosing his wealth.

Assyria was not long in waiting to punish the rebels against her power. Having defeated Babylon, Sennacherib set out upon the campaign against the west. One by one the various members of the league against Assyrian control were conquered and subjected; or surrendered to the Assyrians. While the Assyrian host was besieging Ekron, Egypt advanced with an army. Forgetting Ekron for the moment, Assyria turned to Egypt, and the latter was defeated at Eltekeh. With Egypt's defeats went

the hopes of Judah, and panic seized the capitol. An attempt at defense was made; but when the Assyrians came to the city walls, Hezekiah gave up without a struggle, and was forced to pay an enormous indemnity and send various members of his household to Nineveh. Thus only Jerusalem, in the main, was left of the former kingdom of Judah to king Hezekiah. Isaiah had prophesied this moment for Judah; he was now vindicated. But he did not sit calmly and see the downfall of his people; he set about to help his nation in its time of need.

We have an interesting inscription from the Assyrian in which Sennacherib describes the events in this struggle: [1]"Hezekiah of Jerusalem, who had not submitted to my yoke, forty-six of his strong cities, fortresses and smaller towns round about their border with number, hewing about, and trampling down, I besieged, I took. Two hundred thousand people from the midst of them I brought out, and I counted them as spoil. Himself, as in a cage, in the midst of Jerusalem, his royal city, I shut up. Siegeworks against him I erected, and the exit of the great gate of his city I blocked up." While there is undoubtedly a certain amount of exaggeration in this account, it is interesting to note how the affair is presented from the Assyrian point of view.

Internal reform

Conditions in Judah had become evil, throughout the various phases of national life. The rulers were unjust and

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1. Hodges, Old Testament History, p. 161

were not fair to the people. The judges and priests were full of corruptness and were mercenary in their practices. There had developed among the people a craze and lust for wealth; and the attainment of the ambition for wealth became the high goal of life. There was unfair class legislation, discriminating between rich and poor. Drunkeness abounded, even among the priests and prophets. Idolatry was practised, to the disgrace and misfortune of Jehovah. All told, it was time for a thorough reform and national housecleaning. In facing these conditions, the prophets protest to the people. Isaiah pleads as well as denounces. Micah, his contemporary, threatens and condemns. Together, they set themselves to the bettering of conditions in their beloved Judah. The first thing that was done, the public conscience having been aroused, was the cleansing of the temple. This was no easy task. Idolatry having been practised, the temple had been neglected, and much rubbish had accumulated. This task of the temple-cleansing required sixteen days. This having been accomplished, there followed a ceremony of rededication of the temple. Then the king invited all Judah to come to the capitol to a celebration of the passover feast. Following the enthusiasm aroused by this celebration, the people undertook to destroy the idols, the high places, and the heathen symbols. In particular, Hezekiah destroyed the brass serpent which Moses was reputed to have made in the wilderness. The people had worshipped it, and it had become an idol. So it was broken with the rest of its ilk. Jehovah was made the national God

once again, and his heathen rivals thrown into the rubbish heaps.

All of this was fine, but it was only the surface of religion that had been touched. The prophets continued demanding morality and the true religious spirit in the lives of the people. As a result social conditions were bettered, and the state of society improved. [1]"In his latest recorded activity, Isaiah says nothing about the social evils which had commanded so much of his attention in the earlier days. Rather his words of promise and assurance imply that the rulers and people had amended their ways and were living in accordance with the divine principles of justice and right." But in view of the subsequent history of the nation, and the reaction taken against the reform, we are inclined to take the view of Ottley: [2]"These reforms however scarcely touched the grave evils which festered beneath the surface of the national life. There was little or no response to the cry of the prophets for general amendment of life and the redress of social abuses. Those results of Hezekiah's well-meant effort were at best slight and transient."

As time went on, Sennacherib again advanced into the west, apparently for the purpose of subduing the restless elements in Egypt. Feeling that it was unwise to leave his rear open to possible attack from a strong base like Jerusalem,

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1. Kent, The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah, p. 170

2. Ottley, A Short History of the Hebrews, p. 198

he sent a force up to demand the surrender of the city. When the demands of the Assyrian came to Hezekiah, he asked the opinion of Isaiah. Isaiah replied that Jehovah would not allow his city to be taken. The prophet had faith in his people, and faith in the Lord God, Jehovah. [1]"Thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor cast an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with a shield, nor cast a mount against it....For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake." A strange event followed the refusal of Hezekiah to surrender to Assyria. When the leader of the Jerusalem detachment returned to make his report to Sennacherib about the city he found that, according to the Scripture, "an angel of Jehovah slew in the camp of the Assyrian 185,000 men." What happened we do not positively know; various theories have been advanced. It has been said that a pestilence broke out in the Assyrian camp. Again, a rumor in the east of trouble in the eastern frontier country caused Sennacherib to return home. Herodotus tells us that during the night, rats gnawed the bowstrings of the Assyrians, rendering them useless for fighting purposes. And finally, we are told that Hezekiah paid tribute to the Assyrians. Which is true we do not know. It may be that there is an element of truth in all ideas, that all combined to cause the Assyrian force to return home. Be what it may, we do know that

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1. 2 Kings 19: 32, 34

Sennacherib left the territory, and returned to Assyria. So Jerusalem was saved, and Isaiah was proclaimed as a public hero. He had guided his country along the paths of statesmanship for decades. He had given to the people the word of Jehovah. He had advocated and led reforms. He had devoted himself to the cause and welfare of his nation. He was a leader of Judah, fearing only the truth, and the true God of Judah, Jehovah. He was a splendid example for that later prophet who followed in his steps, Jeremiah.

Chapter 1

The History of Israel in the Seventh Century B. C.

Reign of Manasseh

Manasseh became king of Judah in the year 692 B. C. According to the records, his reign of 55 years was the longest of any king of the Hebrew people. This king held the throne of Judah mainly because he was a vassal of Assyria. He and his leaders remained true to Assyria mainly because it paid them to do so. [1]"The kingdom that Manasseh inherited from his father was a microscopic one, and he held it for fifty-five years simply by permission of Assyria. The territory was so small that the Assyrian Esarhaddon speaks of it as the "city of Judah." Among the great states that made up the empire, Judah was almost a negligible quantity. Yet it paid Manasseh to be loyal; he had his head in the lion's mouth. During his reign he enjoyed peace because he paid his tribute faithfully." [2]"It was during the reign of Manasseh that the Assyrian empire enjoyed its brilliant Indian summer....Rather, Judah and the other states of Palestine prospered during this period because they had learned to submit unresistingly to Assyria's rule."

This period in Hebrew history marks an era of glory and power in the Assyrian empire. Its armies had conquered and held in subjection the countries of the east and the west. Assyrian administrators could be found everywhere. The military

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1. Bailey and Kent, History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, p. 221

2. Kent, The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah, pp. 188-189

strength of this nation was too well known to be trifled with. Assyria, at this time, was the heart and center of the east; and Assyrian authority and culture were the underlying forces of the eastern world. Babylon had been rebuilt, after being destroyed by Sennacherib, and the Assyrian leaders had revived the ancient Sumerian culture through the translation of its old books. This culture was absorbed into Assyrian life; so that in reality Assyrian culture was borrowed largely from the Babylonian. This culture and its stream of religious and secular thought came into contact with the Hebrew people. [1]"Assyrian culture was therefore Babylonian. It was this culture embodying the work of the oldest Semitic civilization in the world that was now poured into Palestine, into little Judah, not only adding elements that, though old, were new to Hebrew thought, but bringing back to life the beliefs and practices that lay buried deep in the Semitic nature of the Hebrews. Small wonder that Manasseh yielded to the tide, that he made his peace and his crown secure by drifting with the currents that set so strongly from Nineveh."

Reaction

Under Manasseh, there was a reaction back to idolatry, and heathenism. All of the old worships and evils returned, bringing with them the various dangers that the prophets had always seen in them. Morality went, and licentiousness

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1. Bailey and Kent, History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, pp. 223-224

returned. [1]"When young Manasseh came to the throne at the age of twelve, his regents were opposed to the strict religious regime, and favored the policy of admitting all kinds of foreign worship. Assyria's success in war for half a century had given her great influence also in religion. Her gods, which had been so popular in Israel in earlier times, came back, and the old heathen customs of worship were renewed. The prophets were forbidden to speak in public. If they dared to oppose the king, they died as martyrs. Isaiah, for example, is said to have been sawn asunder by order of the king." The worship of Baal was restored. The altars and sacred poles, the shrines that had been scrapped under the reform of Hezekiah; all of these were revived and used by the people in their religious life. The worship of the Queen of Heaven, which was a basic part of the Assyrian worship was introduced. Manasseh ordered the courts of the temple of Jehovah opened up for the worship of the host of heaven. Ishtar became a goddess of the Hebrews. The people followed this new religion. Jeremiah says: [2]"The children gather wood and the fathers kindle the fire and the women knead the dough to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven." In doing this, the people were not denying Jehovah a place in their lives. Many held to the idea that they were still worshipping Jehovah; only, instead of his being the leader of the hosts of Israel, he

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1. Purinton, The Achievement of Israel, p. 97

2. Jeremiah, 7:18

was now the leader of the hosts of heaven. The belief was dangerous in its intermingling of the old and the new. It would have led to a degradation in time, of Jehovah, in the minds of the people. He would come to lose the high ethical and moral character that had been imputed to him by the prophets.

Manasseh, himself, was superstitious, and practised soothsaying and divination. He instituted again the horrible practise of child sacrifice, even offering his own son as a burnt offering. There may have been a political reason for Manasseh's permitting the Assyrian gods to enter his land. But there were other reasons also. Undoubtedly, the women of the royal household, and the hangers-on, who had no love for the prophets and morality, did their share in shaping the attitude of the new king. Another factor is the fact that the reforms of Hezekiah were done under pressure, and were reforms of proclamations, rather than reforms of the people themselves. So the reaction came, and heathen idolatry, immorality and licentiousness returned to the land. With the reaction came bloodshed, for the reactionaries persuaded the king to kill those who preached righteousness and the word of Jehovah. It was a bloody time, and a dark one for the moral and spiritual forces and leaders of Judah. The work which Isaiah had done was overthrown, and idolatry placed in power.

The prophets were convinced that idolatry was harmful to the people and the nation. [1] "They objected to idolatry on

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1. Peritz, Old Testament History, pp. 201-202

three grounds: (1) on political or patriotic grounds, idolatry made Israel like other nations--full of foreign customs, an inferior and subject power, and robbed it of its national distinction based on a mission to the world; (2) on moral and social grounds: idolatry meant licentiousness, immorality, and social injustice; and (3) on religious grounds; idolatry denied the supremacy of Jehovah, whom they conceived an only true God. During this period of persecutions the prophets were quietly at work, no doubt, secretly encouraging the faithful, and planning for better times to come." It was a period of persecution and suffering for the faithful and the righteous. Worst of all, many of the people gave up their high conception of religion and God in favor of the immoral rites of the heathen gods. Better times, however, were coming.

Period of Josiah

Amon followed his father Manasseh, and was soon murdered after a reign of about a year. His successor was his young son, Josiah. [1] "The period of Josiah (640-608) was fraught with great political as well as religious events. Among the former were the approach of the Scythians, the rise of the Median empire, the independence of Babylonia, the fall of Assyria, and the battle of Meggido, in which Josiah lost his life; among the latter the finding of the book of the Law and

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1. Peritz, Old Testament History, p. 203

the consequent great religious reformation."

Josiah was but a lad of eight when the assassination of his father occurred, and he was taken in charge by the prophetic party, and became sympathetic with their ideals. He was trained in their way of thinking, and accepted their viewpoint. He assented to reforms, and in time led them himself. Around the year 626 B. C. occurred the great invasion of the Scythian hordes from Europe. These barbarians swept into Media and Asia Minor and Armenia. In the same year, the Assyrian Emperor Ashurbanipal died, and his successor on the Assyrian throne was a weak ruler. This left the way open for the advance of the Scythians. While they lacked the military skill to overcome those cities which had strong fortifications, they were strong enough to conquer and plunder the land through which they passed. It is at this point in history that Zephaniah (chap. 1) and Jeremiah (chap. 4-6) proclaim that this invasion is the scourge of Jehovah, the day of judgment that had been promised to sinful Judah by Jehovah. The Scythians swept through the coastal plain of Palestine, overunning the Philistine towns. Their object was the conquest of Egypt, but they never attained their goal. They were met at the Egyptian frontier by Psamtik 1, who turned back the invaders either through the force of arms, or the persuasion of gold. While Jerusalem was not touched by this invasion, terror had come into the hearts of the people. The feeling of uncertainty and possible disaster was of aid to those who sought to bring about reform.

Book of Law

We know nothing of Josiah's reign until he was eighteen years of age, and it was in that year that the book of the Law was discovered in the temple. According to the Biblical account, Josiah had sent his secretary, Shaphan, to take an audit of the money in the collection box in the temple. He worked on this task with Hilkiah, the high priest. When the work was completed, Hilkiah informed Shaphan that he had found the book of the Law in the temple, and gave it to the secretary to read. It is held by some that the book had been placed there beforehand, and purposely discovered. However, it is possible to hold to the theory that the book was really discovered by Hilkiah in his investigations in the temple. We choose to hold to the latter view. Shaphan read the document, and he was so impressed with its content that he took it to the king and read it to him. When the king heard the instructions of the document, and more particularly heard the curses contained therein, he became alarmed. He called together a group of his advisers, and they were sent to inquire of the prophetess Huldah whether the catastrophe might be averted. Huldah re-affirmed the wickedness and idolatry of the people, but she stated that repentance and reform might be able to postpone the day of judgment. Josiah then began his campaign of reform.

Reform

The first act in the reformation of Israel was the calling of an assembly of the leaders of Judah. At this gathering the men listened as their king read through the book, reading its instructions and the curses which would follow

if the law of Jehovah were not obeyed. Following the guidance of Josiah, the people and the king vowed to adopt the new-found document, with its instructions, as the law of the land.

Following this gathering at the temple, Josiah began to follow out the instructions found in the book of the Law. The Ashera, a sacred pole which had stood by the side of the altar of Jehovah for generations, was cut down and destroyed. The rooms of the Qedishim, those who ministered to lust and immorality, were torn down. The Queen of Heaven, the horses and chariots of the sun, and various altars and shrines of heathen worship were destroyed. The command to destroy the high places was read, and accordingly carried out. As many of these high places throughout the land had already been destroyed by the Assyrians, this was not such a difficult task. These sanctuaries were in the beginning Canaanitish and were built and dedicated to the Baals. They accordingly had about them the tradition and custom of Baal worship. As long as they were in existence it can be seen that it would be useless to try and lead the people to a pure worship of the Lord God Jehovah. Under the leadership of Josiah, these shrines and altars were torn down, and the very ground upon which they stood was polluted, so that it would not be available for religious purposes in the future. As these shrines had been dedicated to Jehovah, the attendant priests were given the opportunity to come to Jerusalem and enter into the priestly family at the temple. They were supposed to be on an equal basis with the priests already located at the temple,

but in reality they were put in a subordinate position, and were from this time on known as Levites. The abolition and destruction of these high places served the purpose of centralizing the religion, focusing the religious life of the nation at Jerusalem and the temple.

Up to this time, the Passover had been a feast confined within the limits of the family. At the specified time of the religious calendar, each family group killed its lamb, sprinkled the blood, and partook of the religious feast. This was now changed, and it became the law and custom that those who wished to enter into the Passover celebration must come to Jerusalem, and there enter into the services at the temple. This new form of the Passover was started with appropriate ceremony by Josiah; thus inaugurating the annual pilgrimages of the Jews to Jerusalem at Passover time.

It was thus a sweeping and far reaching movement which was begun by Josiah and his leaders. This was the justification of the prophetic party and their ideals. Heathenism was to a great extent abolished, and the people turned to the true God, Jehovah. The heathen religions were not wiped out of existence, nor entirely driven out of the land; but they became subordinate, and from this time on, the religion of Jehovah was the religion of the Hebrews. There were Hebrews, such as those who escaped into Egypt after the second exile, who accepted heathenism again, but in the main, the leaders of the Hebrew people followed Jehovah.

What was the Book of Law?

Where did this book of the Law originate? Who was its author? We do not know, but the following statement probably contains truth, if not the whole truth: [1]"....some soul, deeply versed in the custom and history of his people, a disciple of the great prophets, a man waiting reverently on Yahweh, while in forced retirement under the bloody Manasseh, fused together with the prophetic insight some of the honored customs of his fathers, interpreted them in the light of growing needs, wove them into a warp of precept that was essentially prophetic and for private or public use inscribed them on a roll. The writer of this book was both prophet and priest, and his literary work might quite naturally be kept in some corner on one of the many store chambers around the temple. Did he pass away peacefully without revealing to any one the secret of his hidden treasure, or was he a passionate propagandist who under Manasseh died a martyr to his faith? We know not. But that he was a good man, a lover of ritual, yet with undimmed prophetic vision, a conserver of the best in the past, yet a fearless reformer, withal a man of God, this is witnessed by his imperishable message." (Matthews, Old Testament Life and Literature, pp. 195, 196) We would say that it was written by one who was a devout worshipper of Jehovah. He must have been deeply spiritual and religious. He performed his task in the same spirit, and with the same prophetic fervor, that was

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1. Purinton, The Achievement of Israel, p. 102

characteristic of the great leader of the Hebrews, Moses. It is perhaps for this reason that the work has by some been thought to be a product of Moses' activity. It is rather the result of the soul-cry of one, who, possessing the spirit of Moses, gave himself to his task.

Not only does the question of the authorship of this book of the Law arise, but we also are desirous of discovering for ouselves what the book really was. What was the book? Three answers are given to this query by McFayden: [1] "(1) The Pentateuch, which is known as the book of the law; (2) the little section Exodus 21-23, which, in Exodus 24:7, is expressly called the book of the covenant; and (3) the book of Deuteronomy, which goes by both those names." In investigating these three possibilities, we find first that the Pentateuch is too long to meet our requirements, for the newly discovered document was read twice in one day (11 Kings 22:8, 10). Further, the varied contents of the Pentateuch are not such as would produce the alarm and dismay that followed the finding of the roll. The book could not have been the short section of Exodus, for some of the reforms which came after the recovery of the Law are not contained in the Exodus section at all. This leaves us holding the view that this book was very likely Deuteronomy. After we take into consideration the reforms which were instituted, we feel more certain as to the accuracy of this position. The

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1. McFayden, Old Testament Scenes and Characters, p. 151

more important of these reforms were: [1]"(1) the high places were abolished, and worship was centralized at the temple at Jerusalem; (2) the worship of heavenly bodies was done away with; (3) wizards and diviners were driven out; (4) the Passover was celebrated. These various items are found in Deuteronomy, and scholars believe that the book that was discovered was Deuteronomy in a lengthened or shortened form.

[2]"The great glory of this reformation and of the book that caused it rests in the elevation of love as the cardinal principle of both religion and morals. The Hebrew was commanded to love Jehovah as the only God whose character could command respect, and to love man because only so could justice be done. All the heavenward-soaring fervor of Hosea and Isaiah and all the humane outreachings of Amos and Micah here found expression. Indeed, so wonderfully did these early thinkers of Israel penetrate to the heart of the universe that Jesus himself was able in the words and spirit of this book to sum up the whole of religion: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'" There was, however, another aspect of the adoption of this book as the law of the nation. As time went on, the religion of the Hebrews developed from a religion of prophetic spirit and

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1. McFayden, Old Testament Scenes and Characters, p. 151

2. Bailey and Kent, History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, p. 236

emphasis, into a religion whereby men lived through the letter and rule of the law. [1]"It will be interesting to see how this book, so instinctive with the higher spirit of religion, was gradually perverted into an ironclad set of religious rules, until the living prophet of God came to be of no account and the petty, hair-splitting scribe became the dictator of a nation's fate. This was the great tragedy of the Hebrew race." Peritz has the following contribution to make in this regard: [2]"On the other hand this formal adoption of the law as contained in a book was not without certain dangers, which later history made apparent. Up to this point Israel had been under the free guidance of the Spirit. She had her laws and customs, but she had her prophets as well who spoke with the living voice. From henceforth her religion became more and more that of a book of laws, until it reached that legalism and literalism which called forth the warning 'The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.'"

Decay of Assyria

Ashurbanipal, the great Assyrian king, died in the year 626 B. C. His death marked the end of the great Assyrian rulers, and presaged the beginning of the end of the mighty empire. Nabopolassar, who was ruling in Babylon following the death of Ashurbanipal, rebelled against Assyria in 625 B. C., gained the independence of Babylon, and maintained himself upon

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1. Bailey and Kent, History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, p. 237

2. Peritz, Old Testament History, pp. 206-207

his throne. In the beginning, he controlled simply Babylon, and the surrounding territory, but as time went one he enlarged his field of endeavor, until he was master of southern Babylonia. The eastern kingdom of the Medes was at this time independent of the Assyrian power. Egypt likewise was free from Assyria. In the north, the Scythians were pressing in on Assyria. When we take all of these factors and combine with them the fact that the kings which followed Ashurbanipal were weak and insignificant, we can account somewhat for the dissolution of the empire. Assyria became weaker and weaker. The Chaldeans, under the leadership of Nabopolassar, united their forces with those of the Medes against Assyria. The Scythians of the north joined with the Medes in the struggle, and in the year 612 B. C., the proud and powerful city of Nineveh fell under the impact of the allies' attack. It was destroyed, and the Assyrian empire had vanished in a manner similar to that in which Israel had disappeared. Assyria had conquered by the sword, and in the end Assyria was overthrown by the sword. It is in regard to the fall and destruction of Nineveh that the prophet Nahum speaks. He rejoices in the overthrow of the enemy which had for so long oppressed his people. (Nahum 3).

Why did the Assyrian empire disintegrate? It has been suggested that there had been too much intermarriage among the people. The race was too pure, and needed the injection of a new stock into the national blood. Then, there were certain defects of the Assyrian military system. The

campaigns throughout the years had been many and exhausting, both to the man power of the country, and to the national wealth. Agriculture, and the pursuits of peace had been neglected. The use of mercenary troops had been introduced into the army. The conditions of the peasantry had become worse, and their status much lower. In addition to these reasons, the Assyrians had contributed no civilization of their own. The civilization which they had was adopted from the Babylonians. There was no real inner life among the Assyrians. There was no ability among the Assyrians to take the conquered peoples and organize them into some type of a system in which their support and maintainence of the central government could be relied upon. These and other factors entered into the downfall of Assyria. But Assyria had made her contributions to the world. She had given her political organization. Civilization had been distributed under her regime. Commerce had been established, and her wars, although bloody and costly, had helped to maintain a sort of rude peace. There had been a Pax Assyrianum.

Rise of Egypt

During this period, Egypt again lifted herself temporarily into the position of a world power. In the year 609 B. C., Psammetik 1 died. He was followed on the throne by Necho, his son, who ruled from 609 to 593 B. C. Seeing the state of Assyria, and the necessary confusion which resulted from the conquests of the Chaldeans and Medes, he thought that the moment was favorable for an extension of his territory.

He determined to seize for himself the land of Syria before either of the allies could take possession. He set out with his troops for the north, and came into conflict with the army of Josiah of Judah at Meggido. [1]"In his days Pharaoh-necho of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Meggido, when he had seen him. And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Meggido, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead." Why Josiah chose to meet Necho in battle, we are not sure. It may have been that he deemed the hour propitious for declaring the independence of, and for the regaining of the territory of his fathers. Or he may have determined that he and his people would not become the vassals of Egypt. In any case, his decision was unfortunate, for his small army was no match for the well-trained forces of Egypt. Josiah was killed by an arrow, and his army defeated. (608 B. C.)

Jehoahoz and Jehoiakim

The Successors of Josiah

Josiah was evidently a well-loved king, for his people mourned and bewailed his death. His death was tragic for Judah, for if he had lived he might have been able to avoid

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1. II Kings 23:29-30

the pitiful errors of those who followed him on the Judean throne. Following his death, the people placed Jehoahaz, a younger son on the throne of Judah, rather than Jehoiakim, the heir. This was probably done because of the evident sympathies of Jehoiakim for Egypt. But Jehoahaz was not destined to remain long as the ruler of an independent Judah, for after a brief reign of three months, he was summoned by Necho to come into his presence at Riblah, on the Orontes. Jehoahaz obeyed this call, as disobedience would have been futile. Upon his joining Necho, he was placed in chains and sent away into Egypt. Necho then placed Jehoiakim, his elder brother, upon the throne of Judah, as a vassal of Egypt.

Reaction

One of the first acts of the new king was to pay an indemnity to the Egyptian power. The money was raised by extorting it from the nobles, who in turn extracted it in taxes from the common people. Further, the king, desiring to build himself a splendid palace, taxed them still further in the effort to further his selfish wishes (Jeremiah 22:10-17). Gone were the righteous methods of Josiah. Instead, selfishness, cruelty and oppression returned to rule the land. While the reforms still existed as paper statues, men lived and did as they desired. Justice was exploited, blood was shed, violence and robbery inhabited the land.

Chaldean supremacy

The predominance of Necho and his Egyptian forces in Syria was only temporary. After the destruction of Nineveh, the allies had divided their newly acquired territories. The

Chaldeans accepted the lands west of the Tigris, and the Medes took as their portion the country east of the river. This division brought the Egyptians and Chaldeans into direct conflict. Necho brought his forces up to the Euphrates to defend his newly acquired lands, and Nebuchadrezzar, the Chaldean crown prince, came to meet him. The armies met at Carohemish (605 B. C.), and the Egyptians and Necho were routed and defeated. Necho fled to the south, followed by Nebuchadrezzar, who would have entered Egypt if it had not been for the fact that his father died at that time, and he hastily returned to Babylon to ensure his succession to the throne. Egypt's usurped position was lost, and Babylon was now the master of the western lands.

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Jehoiakim lost no time, after the defeat of Necho, in submitting to the power of Babylon. Nebuchadrezzar, accepting his submission and tribute money, allowed him to continue on the throne of Judah as Babylon's vassal. But such an arrangement did not continue for long. For three years Jehoiakim continued as vassal to Babylon, and then he withheld his tribute payment. [1]"Nebuchadrezzar came up to Babylon and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years, then he turned and rebelled against him." It seems that Judah was not alone in this revolt, as a number of the Syrian states were probably included among the rebels. They had hoped for aid from Egypt, but their hope

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1. II Kings 24:1

was futile. [1]"The King of Egypt came no more forth from his land, for the King of Babylon had taken, from the Wadi of Egypt to the river Euphrates, all that belonged to the King of Egypt." Nebuchadrezzar was not able at the moment to deal with Judah, so he sent guerilla bands to prey upon the Hebrews. These bands harried the countryside, but did not attack Jerusalem itself. In fact, Jehoiakim was never captured. Before Nebuchadrezzar could come up to Jerusalem, the king died, and was followed by his son, Jehoiachin.

First captivity

It was at this period that Jeremiah the prophet opposed rebellion against Babylon. He realized the futility of Judah's attempting such an action. There could only be one outcome. Babylon, having the strength and might, could crush the Judean state. But Jeremiah stood alone in his attitude and prophecy. The people continued in their rebellious attitude. Finally, the Babylonian king came up to Jerusalem. Jehoiachin soon realized the uselessness of holding out against him, and surrendered the city to Nebuchadrezzar (597 B. C.). Jerusalem was not destroyed, but Nebuchadrezzar set about to cripple it, thus preventing further difficulty in regard to the Hebrews. Jehoiachin, who had been king only a short time, was sent to Babylon, where for thirty-seven years he was kept as a prisoner. The wealth and resources of the city were investigated, the city was sacked, the temple treasure carried away, and the gold

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1. II Kings 24:7

and silver vessels which were used in the service in the temple were removed. The aristocracy, the wealthy, the skilled artisans, the warriors, were all compelled to go back to Babylon with the Chaldeans. There was a forced emigration at this time of about ten thousand people. In this way, removing the wealth of the city, and taking the leaders of the people, the Babylonians hoped to remove the possibility of any future trouble with the Jews.

The deportation had taken the leaders and strong men of the community. Those who were left could rightfully be called the dregs of the city. This group now proceeded to take possession of the land and estates of those who had gone to Babylon. They became the newly-rich. Leadership was thrust upon them, but they were in no sense of the term true leaders. Superstitious, ignorant, intolerant, bigoted, conceited--they did not have those qualities which constitute leaders of men. They adopted the attitude that those who were deported must have been sinners, and that they who remained were in his favor. Jeremiah dispelled this idea by branding them the "bad figs," while stating that the "good figs" were in Babylon.

Zedekiah

Over this group of non-descripts, Nebuchadrezzar had placed as king another son of Josiah to whom he gave the name Zedekiah. It was not a good choice, but probably the best that could be had. This king, while well-meaning, was weak, and vacillated between the policies of his various subjects. He was not a strong or decisive leader. For four years he gave tribute to Babylon. But he was constantly tormented by his

people, who apparently believed in the indestructible nature of Jerusalem, and thought that it could never be captured. There came an opportunity for Zedekiah to enter into a league for a revolt against Babylon, and while he did not revolt at this particular moment, he came so close to doing it that he had to make explanation to Babylon for his action.

Revolt

Four years after this time, a new king came into power in Egypt. This king, Hophra, again drew Judah into a net of intrigue. Again Jeremiah endeavored to show the stupidity of revolt against Babylon, and of alliance with Egypt, which he called "feeble." But the king revolted in 589 B. C., and Nebuchadrezzar came up to Jerusalem. Jeremiah advised surrender to him as the only hope of the city and nation, but having popular support, the king would not listen to him. The inhabitants, in order to win the favor of Jehovah, freed the Hebrew slaves whom they had held in bondage contrary to the Deuteronomic law. Following this, Nebuchadrezzar raised the siege to give combat to an Egyptian army which was coming to the relief of Jerusalem. The people believed that Jehovah had again rescued his city. But they displayed their lack of loyalty to him by immediately enslaving again those persons whom they had recently set free from slavery. This action proved to Jeremiah that the city was not worth saving. His message to Zedekiah now declared in no uncertain terms that the Babylonians would return, and the city would fall. Having defeated the Egyptians, the Babylonians did return. The conditions inside the city were bad. The food supply was low, and disease broke out. Jeremiah still preached

submission to Babylon; for this he was thought by many to be a traitor to his country, and he was placed in prison. He was released, but his word to the king was still that Jerusalem would fall and be destroyed.

Fall and destruction of Jerusalem

The siege continued, and in July, 586 B. C., Nebuchadrezzar entered the city. Zedekiah tried to escape over the Jordan, but he was captured and taken to Riblah where his eyes were put out, and he was taken to Babylon after witnessing the execution of his sons. The Chaldean soldiers destroyed the city of Jerusalem, and took the wealth of it back with them to their home country. Not only did they take the wealth, but they also took practically all of the population of the city back to Babylon--around twenty-five thousand persons in all. Judah was stripped of her wealth and her population. Only the dregs were left to inhabit the land. She was depopulated, and her power and strength broken.

End of Jewish State

To keep some form of government in Judah, which was now a colony of Babylon, Nebuchadrezzar selected a man named Gedaliah as governor. He ruled for four years, with Mizpah as the capitol of the land. In the year 581 B. C., he was murdered by a man who claimed to be of the blood of David, and therefore one with a better right to rule. The inhabitants were panic stricken. Fearing the wrath of Nebuchadrezzar, the leaders of the community fled over into Egypt, taking the prophet Jeremiah with them. In Egypt, they settled at Tahpanhes, a city where

foreigners were allowed to live. In Egypt, Jeremiah predicted the conquest of Egypt by Babylon. He also denounced his fellow exiles for their adoption of idolatry. According to tradition, he was finally stoned to death by his own people for remaining true to, and proclaiming the truth.

The Jewish state was at an end, for the time being. The people of Jehovah were separated; one group in Babylon, another in Egypt, with a miserable remnant left in Judah. The glory of David and Solomon were in the past. Judah had gone to join her sister Israel. But the glory of the Hebrews was to be not in the ages of the past, but rather in the future. For Israel was to give to the world the great contributions of high moral and ethical idealism. Her contribution to civilization was to be in the realm of religion, not in the field of political history. With this conclusion, we leave the Hebrew history of the seventh century B. C., and turn to a consideration of the prophets of that period.

Chapter 11

The Prophets of the Seventh Century B.C.

The prophetic activity of this century falls in the last quarter, extending over into the time of the exile. We have for our study three of the minor prophets and one major prophet. While the contributions from these men is not as quantitative as the work given to us by the prophets of the eighth century, it is nevertheless interesting, and in the case of Jeremiah, especially, it is significant. [1]"The work of four of our canonical prophets is to be assigned to this period. The activity of Jeremiah covers practically the whole of it, since his call came in the year 626, and he is last heard condemning his fellow-countrymen (and women) for apostasy in Egypt after the final flight thither. He is emphatically the prophet of this period, and, in a large measure, the source of information as to the events and their character. Three others seem to have done their work at separate points in the lifetime of Jeremiah. The first of these is Zephaniah, whose extant oracles are probably to be dated about the year 626; the second is Nahum, circa 607; and the third is Habakkuk, who appears about the same time as Nahum, though he deals with very different matters."

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1. Robinson, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 109

Zephaniah

[1]"The earliest of Jeremiah's contemporaries was Zepnaniah. The occasion of his prophesying seems to have been the appearance of the Scythians....At the time his message was delivered their advance against Egypt was still in the future, though imminent. The prophet considered the Scythians the executioners of the divine judgment upon his sinful countrymen and upon the surrounding nations, and he saw in the coming of the mysterious hosts the harbingers of the day of Jehovah. If this was the occasion, the prophet's urgent calls to repentance and threats of judgment may be assigned, with considerable assurance, to the years between 630 and 625 B. C., perhaps the year 626, the year in which Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry."

Date

[2]Thorn places the prophecy of this man as around the time of the Scythian invasion. [3]Cornill likewise locates his work at about this time. [4]Orchard states that the book was written about one hundred years after the work of Micah. The heading of the prophecy of Zephaniah states that it was written

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1. Eiselen, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 163
2. Thorn, The Prophets of Israel, and Their Message for today, p. 95
3. Cornill, The Prophets of Israel, p. 76
4. Orchard, Oracles of God, p. 113

in the time of Josiah. Aside from this, states Orchard, there are two circumstances which help us to definitely locate the book chronologically. "The first of these is the state of idolatry and religious corruption in Jerusalem, from which we infer that he is describing a period previous to the great reformation begun by Josiah in 620. It may be that the prophet's work had considerable influence in helping forward that reformation, and therefore it would appear to be quite safe to date his prophecy about five years before that historic movement, which very largely purged Judah of idolatrous worship." The second circumstance which he mentions is the one that has been mentioned before, namely, the barbaric Scythian invasion. We may therefore consider it accurate, in an approximate sense at least, to set the time of Zephaniah's prophecy at around the year 626 B. C.

Life

Of the personal history of this prophet, we know very little. In the first chapter of his writing his ancestry is traced back into the fourth generation. Here we come upon the name of Hezekiah in the group; and it has generally been inferred that the Hezekiah therein mentioned was King Hezekiah of Judah. This would make Zephaniah a member of the royal household and a descendant of David, with Hezekiah the father of the grandfather of Zephaniah. In speaking of the prophet, Smith says: [1]"He lacks that sense of intimate fellowship with the poor that

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1. Smith, The Prophets and Their Times, p. 108

belongs naturally to a poor man. His point of view is rather that of the aristocrat." He was familiar with the city of Jerusalem, and was aware of the type of life being lived by the population. He knew the degradation, the immorality, the sin, that abounded there. He declared to the world the corruption and deceit of the ruling class. This condemnation by Zephaniah of the conduct of the rulers is of particular interest in the event that he was a member of the royal household. His was the opportunity of close contact and observation. Combined with this factor, there must have been a certain amount of courage necessary to proclaim the iniquities of those among whom he lived. We do not know the length of his ministry, but Eiselen thinks:[1] "....it is not improbable, however, that, as was the case with Amos, his public activity was short, and that, after delivering his message of judgment in connection with a great political crises, he retired to private life, though his interest in religious reforms may have continued (2 Kings 23:2)."

Writing

The book of Zephaniah may be divided into two sections, of unequal content. In the first division, (1:2--3:7) we find denunciations, threats, and dire forebodings, while (3:8-20) gives promises of salvation, and great glory. Chapter 1 opens with the proclamation of a world judgment which will strike most severely at Judah, because that nation has not listened to the commands of Jehovah, nor has it lived in his way. The

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1. Eiselen, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 164

judgment will be terrible, with cries of agony and suffering on all sides. Everyone will be included in the catastrophe. In chapter 2:1-3, we have a call to repentance. The prophet exhorts his listeners to soften their hearts, and turn unto Jehovah. Chapter 2:4-15 contains judgment condemnations pertaining to five foreign nations. The destruction of Philistia will be complete. Moab and Ammon, full of arrogance and pride, will be destroyed, becoming like Sodom and Gomorrah. In manifesting his power, Jehovah will expose the weakness and debility of the deities of other lands; and all men will worship before him. The wrath of Jehovah will come upon Ethiopia, and the worst calamity of all will befall Assyria, and its capitol city Nineveh. Jerusalem is once more the subject of the prophet's discourse in 3:1-13. The princes of the city are exposed as untrue to their position; the priests are profaners of that which is sacred, while Jehovah has vainly tried to win back the population to purity. They seem set in their sinful ways. The coming judgment, which includes all other nations, will certainly fall upon Judah. There will be a small group which will escape, and these are called upon to stand true throughout the disaster, for the future holds better things. The last section, which many do not believe came from Zephaniah, 3:14-20, gives us a picture of the redeemed daughter of Zion. She has been resuced by Jehovah, who now rules over his chosen faithful. The closing verses present Jehovah as promising peace, salvation

and joy to those whom he has thus chosen.

It is no wonder, that Zephaniah believed that the day of Judgment was impending when he viewed the advance toward his land of the Scythian hordes. Herodotus in his History gives us a picture of these barbarians: [1]"....The Scythians having thus invaded Media, were opposed by the Medes, who gave them battle, but being defeated, lost their empire. The Scythians became masters of Asia.

After this they marched forward with the design of invading Egypt. When they reached Palestine, however, Psammetichus the Egyptian king met them with gifts and prayers, and prevailed on them to advance no farther. On their return, passing through Ascalon, a city of Syria, the greater part of them went their way without doing any damage; but some few who remained behind pillaged the temple of celestial Venus....

The dominion of the Scythians over Asia lasted twenty-eight years, during which time their insolence and oppression spread ruin on every side. For besides the regular tribute, they exacted from the several nations additional imposts, which they fixed at pleasure; and further, they scoured the country and plundered every one and whatever they could." It would take no great amount of imagination to see these hosts as forerunners of the day of the Lord. With the

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1. Smith, The Prophets and Their Times, p. 107

sin and immorality that was prevalent in Judah, the prophet took this opportunity to present his message.

Teaching

The day of the Lord, as given by Zephaniah is terrific in its sweep. [1]"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord; the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men because they have sinned against the Lord; and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their marrow as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land."

This catyclismic upheaval is almost beyond our comprehension. It is to be a time of wholesale slaughter and destruction. Men will die like flies; and be powerless to help themselves in the face of this terrible wrath of Jehovah. It is an imminent day, full of terror and woe. It is coming as a judgment upon the sin of mankind; and it will fall upon everything,

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1. Zephaniah, 1:14-18

man and beast, Jew and Gentile. There will be strange and horrible events in nature; and only a small group of redeemed Hebrews and foreigners will be rescued from the midst of this catastrophe. But to this latter group he gives great hope in the promise of joy, peace, purity, and happiness which shall everywhere abide among them.

Zephaniah did not add much to the religious thought of his people. He follows the thought of the earlier prophets. God's people had sinned. They had ceased to follow him and do his will. Therefore his chosen people, in this case the entire world was included, should be punished in a grand day of judgment. There will be the remnant that shall be saved and live in the glory of God. However, most of this thought had been already declared by the great prophets of the eighth century. The most original thought, most likely, is his idea of including the whole world in such a wholesale and far-reaching upheaval as the judgment day.

Summary

[1]"Zephaniah brought nothing new to the solution" of the problems of his day. He was but echoing the message of his predecessors....He has nothing constructive to contribute to the upbuilding of his nation's life. He is a destructive critic pure and simple. He does not stress the ethical element in the coming judgment; it is rather a punishment sent by Yahweh

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1. Smith, The Prophets and Their Times, p. 110

upon a wicked world that does not recognize his power."

[1]"The work of this prophet is not only very slight in quantity, but both his style and his ideas have a somewhat similar character of lightness. Even his denunciations tend to run into the form of pleasant little lyrics, and few of his words could be described as arresting the mind by their force, or leaving a permanent impression upon the memory....It is obvious that the message and style which thunder in Amos, sob in Hosea, and resound with such majesty in Isaiah, are now losing their power. Zephaniah becomes something of an echo and one that is growing fainter."

Granting these contentions, it still remains for us to recognize that Zephaniah did contribute to his people in the sense that he called them to repentance. He presented them with a true picture of their lives, and exhorted them to return to the religion and principles which Jehovah had given them. In this, he rendered Judah a true service. [2]"The preaching of Zephaniah must have helped prepare the soil of Judah for the great change wrought by the Deuteronomic reform. But so far as any records go, Zephaniah was little more than a voice crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare for the day of Yahweh.'"

Nahum

[3]"Perhaps at about the same time that Zephaniah

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1. Orchard, Oracles of God, pp. 122-123
2. Smith, The Prophets and Their Times, p. 110
3. Bewer, The Literature of the Old Testament, pp. 138-139

prophesied, when Nineveh was besieged by the Medes under Cyaxares (625), but more probably nearly two decades later, shortly before the fall of Nineveh (606), Nahum began to prophesy. He is the least attractive of the prophets. He was a nationalist, and his heart was filled with vengeance for his country's foes. Full of enthusiasm, he welcomed Assyria's fall. At last the brutal despot will be overthrown. All the known world has had to bear his sinful tyranny. At last his cruelty and rapacity, his lying diplomacy are to be requited. Yahweh, the God of history, will judge him. He has ordered the affairs of the world to Assyria's undoing. No other judgment will ever be needed; this one is to be final."

Date

As Bewer has indicated, the time of Nahum's prophecy can probably be located between the years 625 and 612 B. C. Bewer gives the year 606 B. C. as the fall of Nineveh, but recent discoveries tend to locate the fall of that city at the year 612 B. C. [1]"Recently an Assyrian document in the British Museum has been brought to light which makes necessary a revision of accepted opinions with reference to the fall of Nineveh. Heretofore that event has been placed at 607 or 606 B. C. The new evidence shows that it took place in 612 B. C." The new discovery to which Smith makes reference, is due to the work of Gadd. [2]Thorn, holding to the belief that the

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1. Smith, The Prophets and Their Times, p. 122
2. Thorn, The Prophets of Israel, and Their Message for Today, p, 91-92

prophecy is concerned with the historical fall of Nineveh, places it around that period. [1]Cornill states that the book was probably composed around 625 B. C., at the time when the Medes unsuccessfully attacked Nineveh. [2]Orchard is rather vague in assigning any definite date to the prophecy, as he feels that it contains material too varied to be definite. [3]Eiselen believes that it came from some date between 663 and 607 B. C. (He gives the later date as that of the fall of Nineveh.) He sets these limits, due to the fact that the fall of Thebes, which is mentioned, came in 663 B. C., and the fall of Nineveh came in 607 B. C. He gives three crises through which Assyria passed in the second half of the seventh century B. C. The first was the revolt of Shamashshumukin of Babylon against his brother, the King of Assyria, in the period 650-648 B. C. But Nineveh was not in a position dangerous enough to call forth such a prophecy from Nahum. The second of these crises, was the attack on Nineveh in 625 B. C., which we have already mentioned. But our knowledge of this situation is not sufficient to allow us to either prove or disprove that the prophecy came at this time. The final crisis was the definite

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1. Cornill, The Prophets of Israle, p. 77-78
2. Orchard, Oracles of God, pp. 130-131
3. Eiselen, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 169

fall and destruction of Nineveh around 607 B. C. This probably affords us the best situation into which we may fit the prophecy of Nahum. [1]"If," says A. B. Davidson, "the distress of Nineveh referred to were the final one, the descriptions of the prophecy would acquire a reality and naturalness which they otherwise want, and the general characteristics of Hebrew prophecy would be more truly conserved." So we may safely assume that the prophecy was written shortly before 612 B. C., in regard to the impending fall of the city of Nineveh.

Life

We know little about Nahum as an individual. We are not sure as to details of his life. A note in the first of his book says that he was an Elkoshite. But this gives us no additional clarity. In the little village of Alkush, which is about two days' journey to the north, from the site of ancient Nineveh, the natives will show you what they claim is the tomb of Nahum. Another tradition, dating at least from the time of Jerome, in the later years of the fourth century A. D., places Elkosh in Galilee. There are others who claim that Capernaum was the home of the prophet; as the name means Village of Nahum. In a collection of traditions bearing the title: "Lives of the Prophets," we find the statement "Nahum was from Elkosh, beyond Bet Gabre, of the tribe of Simeon." As Nahum is associated with, and interested in the life of Judah, it is

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1. Eiselen, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 169

logical to place his home somewhere in the southern kingdom. There may be some truth in the tradition which places Elkosh near Nineveh, however, as the prophet seems to be familiar with the capitol city of the Assyrians.

Nahum was a thorough-going nationalist. His prophecy is a hymn of hate toward Nineveh, the capitol of those who have oppressed his people for so long a time; it is a song of rejoicing at the imminent downfall and destruction of that city and its inhabitants. [1]"From all the evidence we possess, he was a most violent nationalist and identified his poetic-prophetic gift with patriotism. He cared for nothing so much as to see his people's enemy, the beautiful mistress of enchantment, cast down unwept and uncomforted." His book is an ode of triumph over the fall of those whom he hates.

Writing

In the first section of the book, 1:2-15, we find the decree of the doom of Nineveh. A description of the two aspects of the character of Jehovah is given. He is a God of both vengeance and / mercy. It may seem that he does not punish those who sin against him, but eventually retribution overtakes them. Judah has been long suffering, and has had much to bear. The prophet asks the people if they doubt that Jehovah will mete out justice to their oppressors. He then declares that the doom of Nineveh has been decreed, for her

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1. Hawley, The Teaching of the Prophets, p. 149

people have sinned against Jehovah. Judah will be delivered, while Assyria will be destroyed.

The next section, chapter two, deals with the description of the downfall and destruction of Nineveh. It is most bloody and awful. The army has come up to attack the city, and the defense has begun. The onslaught is terrible, the attack fierce, the slaughter great. As desperate is the attack, so is the defense, but in the end the city falls, a prey to her conquerer. The queen is captured, the population flees, the city is sacked, its wealth and treasures taken, and it is left as a place of desolation, where only the ruins of the proud empire capitol will remain. And in viewing all this in his imagination, Nahum is made happy over the defeat of those whom he hates. Jehovah has worked his will upon the Assyrians!

Chapter three continues the picturization of the end of Nineveh and of Assyria. The prophet pronounces a woe upon the city. She has played a harlot's part, and she will receive the reward of the harlot. There will be none who will mourn for her. Force, and strength of arms will be of no avail to her. Nahum likens her end to that of Thebes, in Egypt, which was sacked by the Assyrians. The city will be destroyed, her power will vanish, and the whole earth will be made glad at her destruction.

[1]"Woe to the bloody city,

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1. Nahum, 3:1-8

Full of violence and lies!
Prey never ceases.
Crack of whip, rattle of wheel,
And the gallop of horse
Along with the jolting chariot!
A rearing war horse,
Gleaming sword, flashing spear,
And a multitude of slain,
There is no end of bodies;
One stumbles over corpses,
From the many deeds of the harlot,
Beautiful mistress of enchantment,
Committing adultery with nations
And peoples with her coquetting.
Behold I'm coming against you, says Yahweh
I've uncovered your garment upon you
I've shown the nations your nakedness
And your shame is revealed to the kingdoms.
I've had uncleaness hurled upon you,
For a vile spectacle have I made you,
And shall hide when once they espy you,
Saying: Nineveh has fallen,
Who shall bewail her?
From whence could I find any one
Who would give comfort to her?

Can it be you are better than No-Amon
Built among the Rivers?
Her sea was her rampart,
Her wall was the water."

Teaching

The single theme and idea around which this prophecy is built is that of the destruction of Nineveh. It naturally follows from this fact that there is little religious teaching. What we find is located mainly to the beginning of the work. Here the two-fold aspect of the character of Jehovah is brought out. The punishment of the wicked is the expression of the divine vengeance, and the salvation of the oppressed ones is the manifestation of the divine mercy. Divine favor and protection comes through faith and trust in Jehovah.

The prophets who had come before Nahum, had given a place in their messages to the sin and guilt of the nation. They had represented punishment and affliction as the result of sin and disloyalty to God, and had insisted that relief and salvation would come only through repentance, and a turning back to Jehovah. Nahum has no place for this conception. Not that he is not interested in it, or does not believe in it, but he rather is concerned only with the coming fall of Nineveh, and the results for Judah. He is pointing out the hand of God in the destruction of the Assyrians, and the meaning of the disaster for Judah. It was not necessary that he bring forth Judah's sin to accomplish this. His cry is hatred for Nineveh,

and joy at her catastrophe. Eiselen believes that we should not impute this to a personal hatred, but rather says that this feeling on Nahum's part is the indignant expression of outraged humanity. That he is the spokesman for the group. Nahum further gives us a religious expression, in that he brings out the universality of the rule of God. In bringing forth his idea of the vengeance and mercy of Jehovah, he demonstrates how the actions of men and nations are effected by the character of God. To those who choose to follow Jehovah and obey his precepts, there will come prosperity and peace. Those who sin and harden their hearts will receive the just reward for their acts. So Nahum exalts Jehovah, and makes his rule and power universal.

Summary

[1]Thorn quotes Dr. Kirkpatrick as saying: "Nahum had a great principle, an eternal truth, to proclaim--the certain destruction of this world's kingdoms built on the foundation of force and fraud; the triumph of the kingdom of God reared on the foundation of truth and righteousness." In speaking of Nahum's idea of God's vengeance, and his retribution coming through human agencies, [2]Orchard states that this concept does not reveal all of God's will or purpose. Nahum sees only a part of the divine plan. "There is no recognition in our prophet

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1. Thorn, The Prophets of Israel and Their Message for Today, p. 94

2. Orchard, Oracles of God, p. 135

that vengeance often goes too far, his view of history is not wide enough to discern that all these repetitions of retribution do nothing to prevent further experiments in oppression. He has not yet reached the vision of the poet Blake, which is only too true a comment upon historical vengeance:

"The hand of vengeance sought the bed
To which the purple tyrant fled;
The iron hand crushed the tyrant's head,
And became a tyrant in his stead."

Nahum presents a part of the eternal plan of God, perhaps, but he does not see the incompleteness of his vision of God's will. This is an interesting comment, which throws a more complete light on this prophet of nationalism.

Such is the man and the prophet. A man of deep feeling, he expresses it in hate toward the oppressor, and in joy at her downfall. He is a patriot, but narrow in his intense nationalism. He contributes little that is progressive in the religious sense. He lived and wrote for an epoch in history. His greatest claim, perhaps, is that he wrote as the spokesman of mankind in expressing this attitude toward the Assyrian tyrant. [1] "In his own day Nahum may have been very popular and important; in the history of religion he holds an inferior place. Were it not that the feelings of oppressed

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1. Bewer, The Literature of the Old Testament, p. 139

humanity found voice in him and that he was conscious of it, his message would have been one of unrelieved nationalism."

Habakkuk

[1]"The hand of vengeance sought the bed
To which the purple tyrant fled;
The iron hand crushed the tyrant's head,
And became a tyrant in his stead."

(Blake)

It is this very problem which is the theme of the book of Habakkuk. He knows of the oppression of the Assyrians and their cruelties. They have been overthrown by the Medes and the Chaldeans; and the Chaldeans have become supreme in the west. The small nations have simply exchanged masters. One oppressor has replaced another. The question in the mind of Habakkuk is this: How can Jehovah use the sinful and wicked Chaldeans as the means of his vengeance toward Judah, who is less sinful than those who come to crush her?

[2]"In the book of Habakkuk a new type of prophecy appears. The prophets were primarily preachers and teachers of religion and ethics. They addressed themselves to their fellow countrymen in an attempt to win them back to Jehovah and

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1. Orchard, Oracles of God, p. 135
2. Eiselen, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 175

a righteous life. Not so habakkuk. He addresses himself to Jehovah, questioning the justice or even the reality of the Divine Providence. He makes complaint to God and expostulates with him."

Date and Life

Of Habakkuk we know nothing. We do not have either his home or his genealogy. Even his name is non-Hebrew. Who and what he was we do not know. He may have been a foreigner who was adopted into the Hebrew race. His work, however, stands for itself. The contribution which he gave to the religion and thought of the Hebrews would be of value if we had no evidence of any direct authorship. As to the time when he wrote and prophesied, we can be somewhat more definite. [1]Orchard fixes a date around 600 B. C., but does not commit himself with any certainty. [2]Bewer sets the time as between 606 and 600 B. C. He does not make any definite statement to this effect; this is simply a direct inference from his writing. He seems to take it for granted that Habakkuk wrote after the fall of Nineveh. [3]Thorn places Habakkuk in the midst of Jeremiah's prophetic career, some time after the fall of Nineveh. [4]Eiselen shows from the text of the book that certain things are indicated: (1) the Chaldeans had not as yet come into direct contact

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1. Orchard, Oracles of God, p. 137
2. Bewer, The Literature of the Old Testament, p. 139
3. Thorn, The Prophets of Israel and Their Message for Today, p. 98
4. Eiselen, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 176

with the Hebrews, (2) they had already given exhibitions of the cruel methods they employed in warfare, so that the Hebrews were familiar with their militarism. As Nebuchadrezzer made Judah a vassal state around 600 B. C., and had defeated Necho at Carchemish in 605 B. C., Eiselen thinks that some time shortly before 600 B. C. is a suitable date for Habakkuk. This position we choose to accept.

Writing

The book of Habakkuk may be divided into three sections. [1] "(1) The prophet's twofold perplexity and the divine solutions (1:2--2:5); (2) A taunt-song over the downfall of the Chaldeans (2:6-20); (3) The "prayer" of Habakkuk (chapter 3)."

The book opens with the prophet's uttering a complaint which arises because Jehovah apparently is unaware of the corruption and evil in Judah, and seemingly does not care about it. This puzzles Habakkuk, for his conception of Jehovah does not coincide with this seeming indifference. In answer to this complaint, Jehovah answers that judgment is coming very shortly, and will be executed through the agency of the Chaldeans.

But this does not help the prophet; it rather increases his problem. Is it possible that a good God can approve the cruel and horrible deeds of the Chaldeans? It is true that Judah has sinned, but are the wicked and sinful Chaldeans to be the executioners and distribute punishment? These problems

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1. Eiselen, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 176

are a source of worry, and his faith is tested, but he does not give up. And the answer comes in the form of a vision, which is to be given to all. The Jews, being righteous, will triumph in the end, while the Chaldeans will perish.

The second section contains mainly a taunt-song against the cruel Chaldean oppressor. Five woes are pronounced upon the enemy for his evil and wicked character: 1. For his desire for conquest and plunder; 2. for his rapacity; 3. because he has built cities with the blood and property of strangers; 4. for his cruelty and oppression toward those whom he has conquered; 5. because of his idolatry.

The book ends with a lyric in which the majesty and might of Jehovah are pictured, and the prophet expresses his certainty that Jehovah controls his life, and in God is his salvation to be found.

Teaching

[1]"The earliest book to raise a question as to the justice of God's dealings with the nation was that of Habakkuk, provided we accept the common view as to its date....But most scholars hold that it dates from the closing years of the seventh century." There was much to trouble the prophet of seventh century Israel. Internally there had come to Judah, under the reign of Jehoiakim, a period of social injustice, oppression and unrighteousness. Jehovah did not interfere

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1. Knudson, Religious Teachings of the Old Testament, p. 277

in this wickedness. Was it that he did not care? Such could not be the case. Why did God, who was righteous, permit such conditions to exist? Habakkuk asks this of Yahweh:

> [1]"O Yahweh, how long shall I cry,
> and Thou wilt not hear?....
> For the wicked compasses about the righteous;
> therefore justice goes about perverted."

This prophet did not doubt God, but he could not understand, and not understanding, he began to question. Experience began to place itself alongside of faith, and the conflict necessarily resulted in his mind.

He despaired; the outlook was dark and gloomy. But he received an answer to his query. In the advance of the Chaldeans, he saw that they had been raised up to be the instruments for justice in the hand of Yahweh. Like his predecessor Isaiah, the prophet chose to interpret that the historic movements and events of his time were guided and directed by Yahweh for the fulfillment of his purposes. But his answer was not sufficient. For justice was not the chief characteristic of the Chaldeans. Their attitude was that of the conqueror, brutal and plundering. They were more sinful and wicked than Judah whom they had been sent to punish. Once more he addresses himself to Yahweh. For answer he receives a vision of God.

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1. Habakkuk, 1:2-4

Yahweh appears as the leader, with splendor and power, in the accomplishment of the freeing of his people and in the destroying of their enemies. God would aid his chosen. But God did not intervene. Conditions did not become better. So the prophet took his stand upon the watch tower, and waited until he received some word with regard to the situation. The answer comes, with the reassurance that the vision that he has seen is true, that Yahweh is in control of the world, and that at such a time as he desires he will work his righteous will.

Let Habakkuk only have faith and believe! Yahweh is righteous. So the prophet speaks forth his woes unto the Chaldeans, confident in his belief in the righteous goodness and power of Yahweh. He knows now:

"Though the cause of evil prosper,
Yet 'tis truth alone is strong:
Though her portion be the scaffold,
And upon the throne be wrong,
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own."

(James Russell Lowell)

Up to this time, the prophets had been content to state, "Jehovah sayeth thus." Habakkuk dares to talk to God, and question him about the justice and goodness of his rule.

He is desirous of interrogating God as to the wisdom of his actions. He has become a religious searcher, not merely content with accepting tradition and dogma. And the beauty of his experience, not only for his time, but for all times, is that through his experience of doubt and unrest he not only kept his faith alive, but came out of this trying period in his life with his faith renewed and strengthened because of his search for truth.

Summary

[1]"This bit of prophecy is an illustration of a familiar truth, viz., that faith is always an achievement, not a mere inheritance....It is the glory of Judaism that men like Habakkuk kept faith alive in the hearts of the people during a series of national calamities that might well have crushed the life out of it. The faith of Judaism grew richer and stronger the more severely it was tried."

"He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,
He would not make his judgement blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them; thus he came at length
To find a stronger faith his own;
And Power was with him in the night
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,
But in the darkness of the cloud."

(Tennyson, In Memoriam, xcvi)

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1. Smith, The Prophets and Their Times, p. 133

His contributions toward the problem of suffering are of value in that he deepens the faith and trust in God in spite of appearances. [1]"The solution, however, which it offers to the problem it raises can hardly be said to go beyond the teaching of the past. Righteousness, we are assured, will ultimately triumph. The prosperity of the wicked will not last; the heathen oppressor will be destroyed. On the other hand, the sufferings of Judah will soon be ended, the righteous will live because of his faithfulness." However, Habakkuk does give us a deep faith and grip on the problems of life. As Bewer states it: [2]"We do not know how great Habakkuk's influence was with his contemporaries, but on posterity it was far-reaching... the formulation of the result of his profound soul struggles was so simple and pregnant that six centuries later Paul adopted it as most adequately expressing the answer to his own deep problem, and after another fifteen centuries Martin Luther found in it the light that illumined and liberated his soul....

The righteous shall live by his faith."

Jeremiah

Fortunately, we know more of the life and activity

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1. Knudson, The Religious Teachings of the Old Testament, p. 279-280

2. Bewer, The Literature of the Old Testament, p. 142

of Jeremiah than of any of the other prophets. This is due partly, states [1]Knudson, to his habit of self-revelation, and partly to the fact that he, like Samuel Johnson, had his Boswell. Baruch, his scribe, was in him in Jerusalem, and also accompanied him to Egypt. The scribe apparently wrote a biography of Jermeiah which was freely used in the editing of our present canonical book.

Date

[2]Knudson says that Jeremiah was born around 650 B. C. [3]Bewer gives the same date, while [4]Robinson places his birth somewhere in the period 650-640 B. C. With these citations, we may accept 650 B. C. as the approximate date of his birth. His home was not in Jerusalem, but rather in Anathoth, a country town about three miles northeast of Jerusalem. His was a priestly family, his father Hilkiah being one of the priests of the village. We may well say, then, that Jeremiah was brought up under religious instruction, being well informed in the religion and faith of his people. Particularly was he informed of the works of the northern prophets, for his people were of the North, belonging to the tribe of Benjamin rather than to Judah. By nature he was shy, gentle, retiring, with deep religious feeling and poetic insight.

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1. Knudson, The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, pp. 168-169
2. Ibid as 1
3. Bewer, The Literature of the Old Testament, p. 143
4. Robinson, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 121

Call

His call to the prophetic ministry came in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, or in 626 B. C. If he was born around 650 B. C., he must have been a rather young man, and he used this argument as a reason for not accepting the call. We have here an interesting contrast with Isaiah. When the Lord inquired, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah's answer was, "Here am I; send me." Jeremiah, however, due to his gentle, retiring nature, rather shrank from answering the call. He answered the challenge, however, and continued in his prophetic office until the years following the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C.

At the time that Jeremiah began his ministry, there was great danger that the country would be overun and captured by the advancing Scythian hordes, of whom mention has already been made. Jeremiah used the moment as an opportunity to call his people to repentance for their sins, and asked them to return to Jehovah, whom they had forsaken. The prophet enumerates their evil deeds, and charges them to forsake their iniquity and seek the favor of God through humility and repentance. Due to their wickedness, they will be punished. Jehovah has sent his agents to visit them with woe and disaster. They will receive from the oncoming Scythians their due reward. But the destruction which Jeremiah pictured as visiting Judah was never realized. The Scythians passed by Jerusalem without doing any harm, and as a result Jeremiah was discredited and branded as a false prophet. [1]Smith thinks that it may have

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1. Smith, The Prophets and Their Times, p. 117

been due to his mistaken prophecy in this connection that he was overlooked when the book of the Law was discovered, and the prophetess Huldah visited instead. [1]Knudson points out, however, that after the death of Josiah, he again began his prophetic activity, and in 604 B. C. he published his earlier Scythian discourses. "Evidently, Jeremiah distinguished between the incidental and the essential elements in his message. His original prophecy of doom had not been fulfilled by the Scythians,as he had expected. But this was a minor matter. There was an essential truth in the prophecy, and now, he says, in B. C. 604, it will be fulfilled by the Babylonians."

Deuteronomy

In regard to the attitude of Jeremiah toward the reform which followed the discovery of the book of the law, there is diversity in the opinions of the scholars. Some hold to the view that he whole-heartedly supported the reform program. Others maintain that he opposed the movement on the grounds that the law came from the pens of false scribes. Both contentions are extreme. It is not likely that Jeremiah would have attacked a reform which was trying to remove evils of which he was undoubtedly aware. Likewise, he was in sympathy with much of the work that was being carried on. But that he whole-heartedly gave his full support may be questioned. For he saw that while the movement was in the right direction, there

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1. Knudson, The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 176

were other things that were also necessary. The heart and soul of the nation must be purified and made clean, as well as the temple. Just as the nation had centralized the worship at Jerusalem, so the nation must centralize Jehovah and his commandments in their lives. Further, this centralizing of worship at the temple was giving a superstitious trust in the temple. The reform was external in many of its aspects, and it was probably this fact that prevented the prophet from accepting it thoroughly.

Jehoiakim

The second period in the ministry of Jeremiah began at Josiah's death, and the accession of his son Jehoiakim. The son was of different calibre from his father. While Josiah had been just, honorable and devoutly religious, his successor was unjust, cruel, oppressive and irreligious. A reaction set in against the reforms, and heathenism and idolatry again lifted up their heads. Jeremiah was not in favor of the attitude and methods of this new king, and he accordingly became the spokesman for purity and righteousness. He took occasion to go into the temple during a festival when a great crowd had assembled, and there delivered an address in which he stated that like the Shiloh of old, the temple would be destroyed. The king heard of these statements, and ordered the arrest of the audacious prophet. But some of the leaders, who perhaps secretly favored Jeremiah, brought forward the fact that under king Hezekiah the prophet Micah had made some such utterance, and he had not

been punished. So Jeremiah escaped for the moment. Another prophet, Uriah by name, who gave something similar to the prophesy of Jeremiah, did not so easily escape. His arrest was ordered; he fled to Egypt; was extradited back to Judah, and then put to death for his prophesy.

This experience was not enough to frighten Jeremiah. About a year or so later, he again gave out a decree of doom, saying in the court of the temple that the city would be destroyed. As a result of this statement he was scourged and placed in the stocks for a period of over night. Jeremiah then declared that Pashur, the officer who had punished him, would go into captivity with his family. Following this bold move, the prophet was denied the opportunity of entering the court of the temple. So he turned from preaching to writing. During the fourth reign of the king Jehoiakim, he dictated to Baruch, his scribe, all of the prophecies which he had given up to that date, and commanded that they be read before the people at the next public fast. Great interest was aroused as a result of this public reading, and Baruch was asked to read them a second time before a group of the princes. The roll was then taken to the king, who took the manuscript and cut it up into pieces, which he threw into the brazier nearby. The arrest of Jeremiah and Baruch was ordered, but they managed to hide. It was probably during this period of concealment that the roll was re-dictated and re-copied, and to the original material was added a terrible curse upon the king himself. We are not sure how

long Jeremiah was forced to remain in hiding from the king. There are some who hold that for the rest of Jehoiakim's reign it was necessary for Jeremiah to keep himself in concealment. The suggestion has been made that he left Judah, to return after the death of the king. We cannot be definite in the matter, only to conjecture that after a time, the king's anger subsided, and the prophet was once more allowed his liberty.

Zedekiah

The third period of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry was during the reign of Zedekiah. Toward the latter part of his reign, Jehoiakim had entered into a rebellion against Nebuchadrezzar. Before the Babylonian forces had reached Jerusalem, Jehoiakim had died, and his son Jehoiachin was king of Judah. The young king was taken prisoner to Babylon, and with him went as captives the cream of the population of Jerusalem. Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, was placed on the throne by Nebuchadrezzar. Jeremiah held that those in Babylon were the good figs, and those who were left in Jerusalem, who had been giving themselves up to pride and arrogance, were the bad figs. Among the captives in Babylon, the hope was held that they should soon return. Jeremiah wrote to them, warning them that they should anticipate a long period of captivity. His enemies in Babylon, the false prophets, wrote to Jerusalem, asking that he be made to keep silent, the attemtp to do which was either not tried or was unsuccessful.

In Jerusalem, the people were seething with ideas of rebellion and revolt against their Babylonian overlord.

Seminar in Penal Justice
Prof. L. Harold DeWolf

Boston University
February 19, 1958

Penal Justice in Utilitarian Philosophy

C. Eric Lincoln

I. Utilitarianism defined:

A. "Utilitarianism is traditionally understood as the view that the right act is the act which, of all those open to the agent will actually or probably produce the greatest amount of pleasure or happiness in the world at large." (Dictionary of Philosophy)

B. "By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or ... to promote or to oppose that happiness. I say of every action whatsoever; and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of goverment." (Jeremy Bentham)

II. The British Utilitarians: Their American Successors

A. Jeremy Bentham - 1748-1832 - had visited Russia

B. John Stuart Mill - 1806-1873

C. Herbert Spencer - 1820-1903 Ethical-nat -

D. Henry Sidwick - 1838-1900 - more intelligent a man is, the better he has the potential of being

Plato - the more a man [illegible] is.

E. American utilitarianism usually primarily concerned with voluntaristic or "interest" theories of value, e.g. in the pragmatic ethics of Wm. James (1842-1910), John Dewey (1859-1952), and R. B. Perry (1876-).

III. Penal Justice in Bentham's Philosophy

A. The Principle of Utility

1. Every human being is goverened by "two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure." Every act is determined by ~~this control of~~ there opposing forces. "The principle of utility recognizes this subjection" and makes it the foundation of morals and law.

2. "By utility is meant that principle which approves, or disapproves of every action" in terms of its augmenting or diminishing the happiness of the party concerned.

3. If the party concerned is the community in general, then the principle applies to the corporate person as it would to an individual.

B. Law defined - a law is but a particular kind of action. It conforms to the principle of utility when the tendency it has to augment the good of the community is greater than any it has to diminish that good.

C. Pain and pleasure - Pain is the only possible evil; good the only possible pleasure.

D. Four Sanctions of Pain and Pleasure.

1. Physical sanction
2. Political sanction
3. Moral sanction
4. Religious sanction - Pain Pleas. of Conscience. - Idea of Rewards & Punishments in after life

E. Punishment of An Act. The end of government is to promote the happiness of the society by punishing and rewarding, i.e., by the official distribution of pains and pleasures. The nature of punishment should rest upon -

1. the act committed
2. the circumstances under which it was committed - contribution to exact derivation from collateral connection conjunct influence
3. intentionality accompanying the act - either to act or consequence
4. consciousness (level of awareness) regarding the act
5. motive - may be anger, drunkiness
6. disposition of the individual (general framework of the personality apart from the act)

F. The Mischief of The Act (Criminal content). The tendency of an act is mischievous when the consequences are mischievous.

1. Primary mischief
   (a) original - ~~"A has a family~~ "A" is killed.
   (b) derivative "A" has a dependent family
2. Secondary mischief
   (a) pain (apprehension) of suffering pain.
   (b) danger - community may be endangered to have pain

G. Deferment of Punishment. All punishment is evil and should be exercised only insofar as it promises to exclude a greater evil. It should be withheld --

1. When it is groundless
2. When it is inefficacious
3. When it is unprofitable or too expensive
4. When it is unnecessary

H. Objectives of Punishment
1. Prevention of all offenses
2. Prevention of the worst offenses
3. Reduction of the extent of the mischief
4. Prevention of mischief as exonomically as possible

I. Administration of Punishment
1. Must be increased in magnitude in proportion to-
(a) a decrease in certainty
(b) a decrease in proximity
(c) the incidence of criminal habituation
2. Must be oblivious of possible aid from the remaining sanctions
3. Must not be excessive in terms of its objectives (above)
4. Must consider the unequal sensitivities of individuals

J. Properties necessary to punishment
1. variability
2. equability
3. commensurability
4. characteristicalness
5. exemplarity
6. frugality
7. reforming tendency
8. disabling efficacy
9. subservience to compensation
(a) vindictive compensation
(b) lucrative compensation
10. popularity
11. remissability

IV. Criticism and Conclusion

V. Bibliography

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Jeremiah was continually advising against such a policy, as he realized the futility of any course of action which would pit Judah against the forces of Babylon. He foresaw that there could only be one logical consequence of a struggle between Judah and Babylon. Judah would be defeated and forced to endure further suffering and persecution. So he counseled submission to Babylon, and the payment of the tribute. In 594 B. C., his attitude caused him trouble with Hananiah, another prophet. Hananiah had declared that in two years' time the nations would be freed from the yoke of Nebuchadrezzar. Jeremiah retaliated by branding such a declaration as false, and prophesying that the penalty for such a pernicious statement would be the death of him who had uttered it. Hananiah was dead within two months. Jeremiah never changed his opinion on the subject of rebellion on the part of Judah. At the time of the final siege of Jerusalem, he still maintained that the only course which could save the city was to submit to Nebuchadrezzar. If they failed to do this, death and destruction awaited the city. Such opinions were bound to arouse antagonism on the part of those who were leading the fight, and when Jeremiah attempted to leave the city, he was arrested as a traitor, on the charge of desertion. Taken to the court of the guard, he still advised the people to adopt the policy of submission to the Babylonians. The nobles finally, having secured the assent of the king, lowered Jeremiah into a well, knee-deep in mud. Here he would have perished but for the fact that he was rescued by

an Ethiopian enuch, Ebed-melek by name. He was again taken to the king, and still his message was that of surrender to Nebuchadrezzar. The king did not adopt this course, and the end was, as Jeremiah knew it would be, the capture and destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of its inhabitants.

Nebuchadrezzar gave Jeremiah his choice of going to Babylon or staying with the miserable remnant in Jerusalem, and he chose the latter alternative. He evidently thought to devote his energies to the reconstruction of his nation, and the welfare of his city. But it was not long until the governor appointed by the Babylonian king was murdered, and the leading Jews had fled to Egypt. They forced Jeremiah to go with them, and there, still pursuing his denunciation of them for their idolatry, tradition says he met his death at the hands of those whom he tried to help.

[1]"Thus ends the career of this intrepid spirit whose spiritual pilgrimage we have been able to follow over a long and tragic period of more than forty years. His contribution to religion was twofold. There was his teaching, but over and above his teaching, there was the man himself." We have already mentioned the man, and his sensitive, spiritually poetic nature. We will now discuss his contributions to the religion of his race.

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1. Calkins, Jeremiah the Prophet, p. 351

God

In agreement with the other prophets of his nation, Jeremiah believed in the Lord God Jehovah, who had made a covenant with Israel, and had protected and favored them, in spite of their many idolatries. In two ways, however, Jeremiah advances further than the rest of the pre-Exilic prophets in his conception of Jehovah. He very explicitly denies any existence of any other God. Idolatry is not only irreligious; it is not a rational view. The Hebrew prophets had gradually developed in the thought of monotheism. Ethical qualities had been assigned to Jehovah, which tended to universalize the conception of his power. The underlying ideas that would in time destroy polytheism were here expressed, but they were still more or less in the basic state of development. In Jeremiah we have the complete expression of the thought. He does not concede the existence of any other God but Jehovah. Jehovah for him is the one and only deity to be worshipped. He is the forerunner of the final monotheism brought out by the prophets of the exilic period.

Jeremiah progressed further than did his fellow prophets in another way also. To the prophets that preceded him, God, and his authority had been accepted on the basis of the tradition of the past. God came to them largely through the history and teachings of their people. Undoubtedly Jeremiah also knew God through these sources, but God was revealed to him in another manner. He knew God through his own personal experience.

Throughout his life, he was misunderstood, and persecuted, and in his despair there was often only God to whom he could turn. He talked with God, communed with him, had fellowship with him, one spirit with another, until he felt the closeness and uplift of the true heart of God. For the other prophets God had been transcendent, wonderful, awe-inspiring. To Jeremiah he was a friend, a comrade, a bit more like the Father which Jesus has given to us. God was personal, spiritual, a being with whom one could enter into intimate contact and feeling. Religion thus became an individual affair between man and his God. The earlier prophets were concerned with the relationship which existed between the nation and their God. Sin was national, redemption was national, religion was on a national basis. But now it was to be changed. [1] "It is hard for us to realize what a great step forward in the history of spiritual religion was taken when Jeremiah boldly declared that the true subject of religion was not the nation, but the individual. The best thought in Israel had been gradually tending to this conception, but it could only come as a divine revelation through an experience like Jeremiah's. He had witnessed the powerlessness of the authority of king or law-book to impose a reformation upon the people from without. He had realized that the Temple, which was indispensable to religion as it was then understood, must be destroyed. But in the depths of his own soul he had

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1. Thorn, The Prophets of Israel and Their Message for Today, p. 112-113

discovered the possibility and necessity of a more direct and personal relationship to God, and he knew that the experience granted to him was meant for all."

Sin

With this spiritualization of the religious experience came the new conception of sin. Like his fellow spirits, Jeremiah had preached against the sins of the people: immorality, injustice, idolatry. He is very dominant in the way he attacks the evils of his day. The covenant which Jehovah had made with Israel was to be broken, and the people would receive the due punishment for their sin. Jeremiah, we have said, was as insistent as the rest in this matter. But he traced sin further back to its source than did the other prophets. He was the psychologist among his fellows. He again took into consideration his own personal experience with God. How was he in his relationship with the Lord? Was he himself clean--he who claimed to be giving the word of God? He discovered that he himself was sinful, deceitful, and not always worthy. If this were true of himself, it must follow that it was true of others. He found that he, who was seeking to do the will of God, had possibilities of sinning. Then those who did not follow after God and his way must certainly have sin within their hearts. So he viewed sin as a spiritual disease--a malignant infection which must be driven out of the heart before righteousness could become a part of the individual. He did not preach total depravity of a human being. The stork

in the sky has its instincts; so also the human heart and spirit has its instinct toward God. What is necessary is that this inherent desire to know God, and become one with him, shall rule the soul and spirit of the individual. Here again Jeremiah is drawing near to the teaching of Jesus, who held that sin came from the impure motives of the inner life.

New Covenant

If the basis of sin is found in the human soul and spirit, then the cure for evil must also be found there. The evil desires, passions, and lusts, must be removed from the heart and be replaced by that which is pure, high, and noble. As a result of this idea, we have the conception of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant, between Jehovah and his people, was insufficient. It had been external and was imposed from without. The new covenant was to be one of pardon and grace. A covenant to be effective must be the development of mutual affection, which comes from common interest of ideals and purpose. [1] "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah....I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the

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1. Jeremiah, 31:31-34

greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more."

[1]"Here, for the first time, true religion is truly expressed as (1) the concern of the individual far more intimately than the concern of the nation as such; (2) as depending ultimately on perfect harmony with the will of God; (3) as attainable, not by any outward conformity, but only in a spirit and a life."

Once again Jeremiah approaches the spirit of the New Testament. But he falls far short of the completeness of the message of Jesus. He describes the transformation which shall take place, but he does not show how it is to be accomplished. It is promised, but that is all. The hope is placed before our eyes, but not the manner of attainment.

Doom

Jeremiah is essentially a prophet of doom. Like Hosea, he has the belief that his nation is in a peculiar sense the chosen of Jehovah. They have been led, guided, and protected by Him in the past. He has watched over Israel, his favored. But his chosen has proved faithless. His people have forsaken him, and have chosen immorality, idolatry, and wickedness instead. They have desecrated his temple, and violated his commandments. Their ways are evil, and their actions an abomination unto Jehovah.

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1. Longacre, A Prophet of the Spirit, p. 117

But the people, in spite of their sinful lives, have a feeling that because they have continued faithfully in the externals of religion, they deserve the continued favor and protection of Jehovah. They have put their trust in the external temple. Their spiritual natures and their finer feelings have become dull under the continual practices of evil that have been theirs. Jeremiah strongly attacks this self-satisfaction and smugness which is content with superficiality, and at the same time practices that which is iniquitous. He foretells the judgment which is bound to follow such actions as those of his people. They cannot hope to continue in the favor of God as his chosen. He pleads with his people to change their ways, and return in humble repentance unto Jehovah, their God. But the years pass by, and the people still follow their selfish desires. The prophet comes to the place where he feels that hope must be abandoned, for there is no moving the heart of his nation. Justice, the justice of Jehovah must surely come in judgment upon these evil-doers. Even though it should happen that Moses and Samuel would intercede for the people, it would be of no avail. They have gone too far in their evil way. Death and destruction are what the immediate future holds for Judah.

Restoration

Jeremiah does not stop here, with doom, and no message of hope for the future. He looks forward to a time when the justice of God, having been satisfied, his people will again be restored and live faithfully under his rule. There will be

a faithful remnant which will be rescued from exile, and this group will form the basis of the new kingdom of God. These people will in due time be saved from Babylon, and be brought back to Jerusalem. The Babylonian power will be broken, and the exiles' return will be glorious; so great that it will overshadow the deliverance from Egypt. The Jerusalem of the present, being evil and sinful, will be destroyed, but there will emerge a new Jerusalem in which the exiles will live, obeying God and his commandments. The Davidic line has had rulers who have been worthless and a disgrace to their heritage. Over the restored city there will reign a descendant of David, righteous, wise, and just. The new covenant, of which we have already spoken, will be enacted, and the people brought into closer fellowship with God. Religion will be a matter of the spirit, not of external symbolism. As a result of this inner fellowship with God, there will come a new sense of responsibility. The individual will be responsible for the right and wrong in his life. Finally, there will come a time when all of the nations, having seen the wonderful power of Jehovah, will see him as the true God, and will then take their place among those of the redeemed. Jeremiah, then, is the prophet of doom for his people. But it is a doom out of which will come a purified and deeply religious Israel. A nation of righteousness, seeking to know God and do his will. The new kingdom of God will come on earth.

Suffering

Like Habakkuk, the prophet Jeremiah was one of the

pioneers on the problem of suffering. But unlike Habakkuk, his contribution was in the field of suffering as it relates to the individual. [1]"Wherefore, doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they at ease that deal treacherously?" The implication here is that the wicked should suffer for their misdeeds, but apparently they do not. When he asks why such a condition should exist, his answer is that the fact is so commonplace that there is no particular reason why he should concern himself and worry over it. Further, in his case his own peculiar individual sufferings drove the conception of general suffering from his direct thought. He speaks from his own personal experience. He deals not with the general idea of suffering, but makes his contact and approach to the problem from the suffering in his own life.

Here was a man who by nature was a lover of peace. Contrary to his natural desire and instinct, he was called upon to enter into the affairs of man and be a fighter. He was a man of deep feeling; a man who would have made a fine husband and a devoted father. A man whose natural tendency led him to family life. But, because of his prophetic vision and insight, the joys of a home and family were denied to him. For he could not, and would not, bring children into the world, merely to be slain by the enemy, which he could see was coming

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1. Jeremiah, 12:1

in the near future to destroy his people.

Due to his prophetic utterances and attempts to guide his nation and its leaders, he was often persecuted. His motives were misunderstood; he was accused of being a traitor to Judah; he was scourged, imprisoned, cut off from human fellowship, whether in prison, or free to mingle with men. Further, the prophet was forced to speak the doom of his nation; to pronounce a future of disaster and chaos for all that was near and dear to him. He could see the end of the path which Judah and her leaders were following. The policy of the nation could only end ultimately in destruction. It fell to his lot to pronounce this destruction both by word and action.

Finally, and here it is that we have the crux of Jeremiah's experience, he felt that God had not treated him fairly. God had enticed and over-persuaded him into the role of the prophet, only to withdraw his support, and leave Jeremiah to face persecution alone. As a result of this feeling, he was rebellious and angry toward God. But this attitude was not his permanent view of his relation to God. He felt rather, that this was a feeling which he should eliminate in his contact with his God, that his rebellious utterance was not worthy of his high relation to God. The idea is suggested that fellowship with God is of such high value that we ought not to consider suffering as compared with it. This is Jeremiah's great offering to the problem of suffering. He demonstrated that it

was not inconsistent for one who had close fellowship with God to suffer; and further, that this close fellowship removed any cause for rebellion against the will and justice of God.

Jeremiah did not settle the problem of suffering. He rather learned how to live with suffering, and still keep his high and intimate connection with God. In this way he could keep his inner poise and equilibrium of spirit, which would enable him to withstand the vicissitudes of life.

Summary

Jeremiah was a prophet, a man, a leader of his people. He, like Isaiah, was the statesman for his country. He stood for the true God, Jehovah; and for morality, and loyalty to ideals. He was misunderstood and disliked; but he stood true and firm to the truth as he saw and understood it. He was self-sacrificing and devoted to the cause of Jehovah and Judah. His was the noble spirit. There is no great difficulty in believing that the prophet who gave the picture of the suffering servant of Jehovah, had Jeremiah in mind. "He was despised and rejected of man; a man of sorrows and acquainted with gried; and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did deem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

Summary

We have attempted to present, in a rather broad and sweeping survey, the trends of history and religion as seen in Judah during the seventh century B. C. Beginning with Hezekiah, we have seen how the Assyrian advances were withstood. We have noted the superficial religious reforms which were enacted under this king. He in turn was followed by Manasseh, whose policy was that of reaction against the religion of Jehovah, and the reforms which had gone before. Under him, the prophetic party was persecuted, and heathenism and idolatry flourished. He was succeeded by Amon, whose successor was Josiah. He, unlike his predecessors, was a just and religious king. During his reign, the book of the Law was discovered, and the reforms which it commanded were carried out. He met his death at Megiddo, attempting to halt the advance of Necho of Egypt, who was on his way to seize the western lands of the decadent Assyrian Empire. His son Jehoahaz came to the throne, only to be removed by Necho, and replaced by another son, Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim was a miniature of Manasseh. Selfish, cruel, and irreligious. During this period, Nineveh had fallen under the combined impact of the Medes and the Chaldeans. Necho had been defeated at Carchemish by Nebuchadrezzar, which victory gave the Chaldeans the mastery of the west. Judah became a vassal of Babylon. Jehoiakim finally rebelled against Babylon, and

fortunately, perhaps, he died before Nebuchadrezzar reached Jerusalem. His son Jenoiachin was taken captive to Babylon, and Zedekiah appointed king. The city suffered its first deportation of citizens, and loss of wealth. Zedekiah in turn chose to rebel against Babylon, and in 586 B. C., Jerusalem was captured and destroyed by the Babylonian forces. The greater part of the population were taken captive to Babylon, the city was sacked, and its wealth appropriated. Gedalian was made governor over the remnant, only to die at the hand of an assassin. The remaining leaders fled to Egypt, marking the end of any type of established Jewish state at that time.

In religion, four prophets have been considered. Three of them are minor prophets, Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk. The last to be considered was Jeremiah, one of the greatest of the Hebrew prophetic spirits. Zephaniah contributed his theme of universal judgment and day of doom, Nahum his intense nationalism, and Habakkuk his eternal message of living through faith. Jeremiah, as we have seen, made religion a matter of the relationship between man and his God. He individualized religion. He lifted religion from the plane of external ceremonialism, and made it a spiritual force. He showed men how the age-long and ever-present problem of suffering might be met, and, if not overcome, at least subdued. All of these men contributed in the growth and development of the Hebrew religion, but we must state that it is from Habakkuk and

Jeremiah that we receive the greatest and highest truths.

This period in the history and religion of Israel was one of transition and change. The kings and leaders seemed to waver between reform movements and reaction. There were periodic revolts and rebellions against overlords. The Assyrian empire fell, to be followed by the Babylonian power. The prophets in turn were affected by the historical developments, and they are largely concerned with the political aspect of their time. Uncertainty seems to prevail in much of their writings. Finally, the Jewish state vanished, and all seemed lost. But through the ages have come the words of Jeremiah, and men have seen in Habakkuk that for which they sought, "The righteous shall live by his faith."

With the picture before us of the various movements which constitute the history of seventh-century Israel; the portrait of the leaders who guided her destiny in that period; hearing the high and far-flung voices of the prophets; in toto with the realization of the tremendous legacy which we have received from the Hebrew race, and splendid heritage which is ours; with this picture before us let us cease our work, for

"What is to be is written."

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